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EVALUATION OF SEVERAL EXPERIMENTAL AVIATION SELECTION TESTS

James R. Berkshire



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EVALUATION OF SEVERAL EXPERIMENTAL AVIATION SELECTION TESTS

James R. Berkshire

Bureau of Medicine and Surgery
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SUMMARY PAGE

THE PROBLEM

The tests currently available for the selection of men to be trained as naval aviators leave room for improvement. This is a study to determine whether any of several experimental tests might add significantly to the validity of the present battery.

FINDINGS

A short-form of the Instrument Comprehension test and the more valid items of the Background test appear to merit revalidation under actual selection conditions. One or two of the scores from the Prestige/Security scale may add to the validity of secondary selection formulae, i.e. those used to estimate the probable success of students who are already in training.

INTRODUCTION

This report describes efforts to develop several new tests that might add to the validity of the battery used to select naval aviators. The current battery includes a general intelligence test, the Aviation Qualification Test (AQT), which, while mainly verbal-numerical, also contains some items that measure clerical accuracy. Scores on this test relate to performance in academic subjects, usually with correlations of about .60 in unrestricted samples. The balance of the battery includes two tests, the Mechanical Comprehension Test (MCT) and the Spatial Apperception Test (SAT), that discriminate between potential flight failures and successes, and a third test, the Biographical Inventory (BI), that has a useful predictive relationship to voluntary withdrawal from the flight training program. Scores from these latter three tests make up a composite "Flight Aptitude Rating" (FAR) which is expressed in stanine scores. In an unrestricted sample these scores usually have a correlation of .40 to .50 (biserial) with a dichotomous, completed/dropped criterion.

Figure 1 shows the relationship of the FAR battery scores to success in flight training. It can be seen that even in the two highest stanine groups, about 15 per cent of the selectees failed to complete the program. It was reasoned that if there were flight training failures among this 15 per cent, an examination of the causes of their failures might reveal areas of flying ability not now covered by the tests.

Twenty such persons were found, and the comments made about their flying by the flight instructors were examined. Two comments occurred sufficiently often to be provocative: The first described a persistent pattern of landing too high or too low, an apparent inability to judge the height of the plane in relation to the runway; the second dealt with the students being unable to proceed correctly through the sequence of actions required to complete a maneuver.

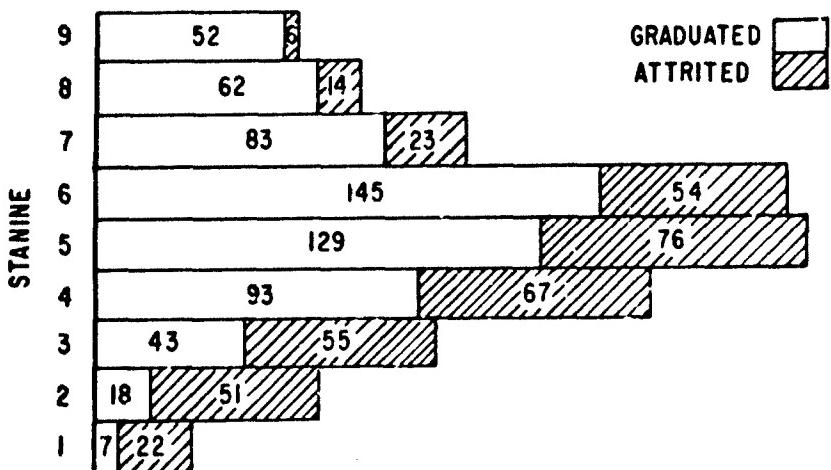


Figure 1

Relationship of FAR Scores to Success in Flight Training

EXPERIMENTAL TESTS

Two tests hopefully intended to measure these abilities were devised, "Altitude Judgment" and the "Maneuvers Test." For the Altitude Judgment test a large number of 35-mm photographs of the runway were taken through the windshield as a plane was coming in for a landing. They were taken at various points in the descent and with the plane in varying altitudes and positions relative to the landing strip. From the finished slides reproducible drawings were made by projecting the slides on a glass screen and tracing them on translucent paper. A selection of these was made for the test, a portion of which is shown in Appendix A.

The "Maneuvers Test" described the operating characteristics of a hypothetical, simplified airplane. It then asked the subject to specify the sequence of throttle, rpm, and stick positions necessary to complete a series of maneuvers. These included "take-off," "climbing turn," "figure eight," "Immelman," "power-on glide," "field entry," and "landing." The correct answer might require as many as twelve steps which had to be in correct sequence. While a trial run of this test indicated some validity, the test was too difficult and the original scoring methods were unsatisfactory for general use. Efforts are current to develop a more practical version of the test.

A third test was developed by choosing from the sixty-item Instrument Comprehension Test used in the selection of Air Force Pilots the twenty items with the largest correlations with total test score. A sample item is shown in Appendix B.

These three tests were given preliminary evaluations by administering them to a mixed input of aviation trainees and obtaining their point biserial correlations with a criterion of pass/fail in basic training. Table I shows the results. The obtained coefficients, while not very exciting, were significant at the .01 level and suggested further investigation.

Table I
Preliminary Evaluation of Three Experimental Tests

Test	No. Succeeded	No. Failed	Biserial
Altitude Judgment	480	78	.161
Maneuvers	310	37	.169
Instrument Comprehension	335	61	.140

Two other experimental tests were included in the evaluation covered by this report. One was called the "Background" test (1). This is a twenty-item scale used to estimate the cultural (or socioeconomic) level of the home at the time that the respondent was in high school. The remaining experimental measure is shown in Appendix C and derives from a scale originated by P. Nelson (2). The scale lists seventeen occupations as they were ranked in prestige, and then in security by aviation trainees. The subject is asked to place the naval aviator and the naval flight officer where he feels they belong in these rankings. Four scores were obtained; the Prestige and Security scores were the numbers of the levels at which the subject placed the naval aviator. The Prestige Difference and the Security Difference scores were the differences between the ranks that the subject assigned to aviators and to NFO's.

PROCEDURE

The experimental tests were administered to aviation students during their first week at Pensacola. Two years later the data were divided into the scores of those who completed training and of those who did not. The number of students was large enough also to permit division into Aviation Officer Candidates, who are college graduates, and civilian procured naval cadets, who normally have two years of college. Selection variables and a mathematics qualifying examination, also given during the first week, were included in the analysis.

RESULTS

The correlations of the variables with each other and with a complete/attrite criterion were computed. The Wherry-Doolittle procedure was used to identify the best combination of variables with which to predict attrition, and the appropriate weights were determined. Table II shows the results for AOC's during Pre-Flight training.

The Prestige Difference score and the Instrument Comprehension score were the second and third variables chosen. The Background and Security Difference scores also added to the multiple validity; however, the amounts they added were of little practical importance.

Table III shows the prediction formula for naval cadets during the same stage of training.

This formula differs somewhat from the formula for AOC's in that the Security Score replaced the Prestige Difference, and the SAT replaced the Instrument Comprehension Test.

Tables IV and V show comparable data taken at the end of Pre-Flight School and including Pre-Flight grades and ratings in the matrix.

Table II
Prediction Formula for AOC's* During Pre-Flight Training

Variable	Cumulative Shrunken R**	Raw Score Weight
MCT	.2390	.016
Prestige Difference	.2854	.038
Instrument Comprehension	.2925	.010
BI	.2956	.003
Background	.2958	-.004
Security Difference	.2961	-.012

*N = 407

**R, point biserial

Variables not selected: Age, Education, AQT, SAT, Incoming Math, Altitude Judgment, Prestige Score, Security Score. (The matrices on which Tables II through V are based are shown in Appendix D.)

Table III
Prediction Formula for Cadets* During Pre-Flight Training

Variable	Cumulative Shrunken R	Raw Score Weight
MCT	.1802	.011
BI	.2331	.006
Security Score	.2576	.018
Age	.2721	-.002
Background	.2832	-.006
SAT	.2869	.006
AQT	.2935	-.003

*N = 379

Variables not selected: Education, Incoming Math, Altitude Judgment, Instrument Comprehension, Prestige Score, Prestige Difference, Security Difference.

Table IV
Prediction Formula for AOC's* at End of Pre-Flight Training

Variable	Cumulative Shrunken R	Raw Score Weight
Power Plants	.2353	.007
Peer Rating	.2844	.009
MCT	.3174	.013
Prestige Difference	.3539	.039
BI	.3560	.002
AQT	.3570	-.003
Instrument Comprehension	.3578	.007
Security Difference	.3587	-.012

*N = 405

Variables not selected: Age, Leadership, Navigation, Incoming Math, Prestige Score, Education, Physiology, Principles of Flight, Background, Security Score, SAT, Naval Orientation, Study Skills, Altitude Judgment.

Table V
Prediction Formula for NavCads* at End of Pre-Flight Training

Variable	Cumulative Shrunken R	Raw Score Weight
Power Plants	.2548	.005
Navigation	.2870	.008
BI	.3115	.005
Peer Rating	.3301	.006
Education	.3442	-.039
Background	.3539	-.006
Security Score	.3630	.014
Age	.3691	-.002
AQT	.3762	-.005
MCT	.3830	.006
Physiology	.3843	.003

*N = 377

Variables not selected: SAT, Principles of Flight, Altitude Judgment, Prestige Difference, Leadership, Study Skills, Instrument Comprehension, Security Difference, Naval Orientation, Incoming Math, Prestige Score.

DISCUSSION

First it should be noted that the multiple correlations shown in Tables II through V are from samples that have been severely restricted in range on the selection variables. This is so because individuals with low scores on the Flight Aptitude Rating and on the AQI were not accepted into the program. One effect of this is to limit the size of the correlations that can be obtained using these variables. But another is to increase the likelihood that other variables, not deliberately restricted by the selection process, will enter into the obtained multiple correlations. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that those experimental measures which add to the multiple correlations here would also add to them in the initial selection situation, where the variance of the present selection tests is still unrestricted.

Table VI shows which experimental tests contributed to each prediction formula. The Altitude Judgment test did not get into any of the four multiples. Thus it can be concluded that the validity shown for it in the preliminary study (Table I) duplicates variance that is present in other tests. From the intercorrelation matrices (Appendix D) it can be seen that these tests are probably the MCT and the Instrument Comprehension test.

Table VI
Contributions of Experimental Tests to Multiple Correlations

Experimental Test Variable	AOC During Pre-Flight	NavCad During Pre-Flight	AOC After Pre-Flight	NavCad After Pre-Flight
Altitude Judgment	--	--	--	--
Instrument Comprehension	✓	--	✓	--
Background	○	○*	--	○
Prestige Score	--	--	--	--
Prestige Difference	✓	--	✓	--
Security Score	--	✓	--	✓
Security Difference	○	--	○	--

*Checkmarks in circles indicate negative Beta weights.

The Instrument Comprehension Test entered into the formulae involving AOC's but not those involving NavCads. Given the low correlations and small increments with which we are dealing, this can probably be ascribed to chance. One should investigate this test further in the primary selection situation. The same can be said of the Background Test which added somewhat to three of the multiples. It exhibited negative Beta weights, higher socioeconomic level being associated with higher attrition rates. The more valid items from this test could very easily be added to the current Biographical Inventory and revalidated under selection conditions.

The Prestige/Security Scale presents a different case, however. Three of the four scores had some validity, but completion of the tests appears to require more knowledge of the pilot/NFO career options than men in the primary selection situation would be likely to have. Thus this test should probably best be given during test time that is available during the fifth week and the results validated when new secondary selection (student prediction) formulae are developed.

CONCLUSIONS

The short-form Instrument Comprehension test should be validated with the present selection battery.

The valid items from the Background Test should be incorporated into the Biographical Inventory and revalidated under selection conditions.

The Prestige/Security Scale should be administered during the fifth week of training and the scores included in the next developmental analysis for student prediction formulae.

REFERENCES

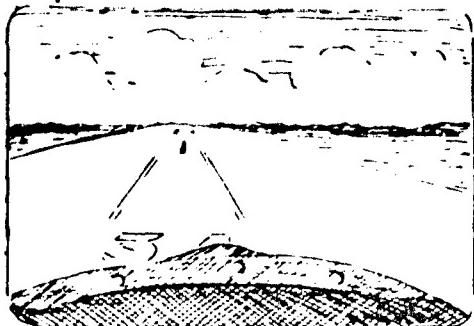
1. Berkshire, J. R., and Waters, L. K., A measure of cultural background.
NSAM-233. Pensacola, Fla.: Naval School of Aviation Medicine, 1959.
2. Nelson, P. D., A note on occupational ratings of security and prestige.
NSAM-325. Pensacola, Fla.: Naval School of Aviation Medicine, 1957.

APPENDIX A

Partial Instructions and Sample Items from the Altitude Judgment Test

This is a test of your ability to judge the altitude of an aircraft from the cockpit. The pictures used in the test are drawings made from photographs taken during actual landings. Four of the pictures are identified by the letters W, X, Y, Z. Twelve are numbered. You are to compare each of the lettered pictures with each of the numbered pictures.....

**IF PLANE SEEMS HIGHER IN
LETTERED PICTURE - MARK A**



W

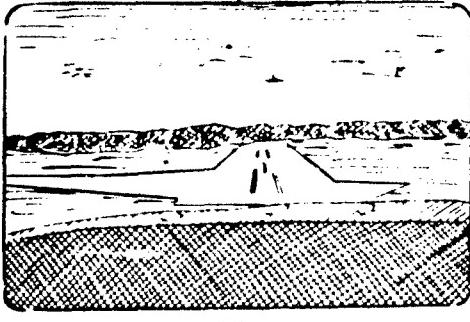
**IF PLANE SEEMS HIGHER IN
NUMBERED PICTURE - MARK B**



I



X



2



Y



3

A-1

APPENDIX B

Partial Instructions for Instrument Comprehension Test

The compass indicates the direction in which the plane is headed. Note these sample readings:



HEADED NORTH



HEADED WEST



HEADED NORTHWEST



HEADED NORTH OF NW

The artificial horizon has two functions. First, it shows whether the plane is climbing, diving, or flying level. Second, it indicates the amount and direction of bank of the plane.

When climbing, the horizon lines appear below the small plane as in dial 1. When diving, the horizon lines appear above the small plane as in dial 2. When flying level, the horizon lines are even with the small plane.



1. CLIMBING



2. DIVING



3. LEFT BANK



4. RIGHT BANK



5. LEFT BANK, CLIMBING



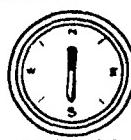
6. RIGHT BANK, DIVING

Now examine the dial readings in problem B. Then select the correct position of the plane.

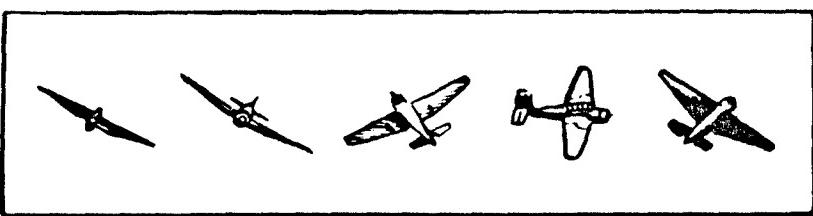
PROBLEM B



ARTIFICIAL HORIZON



COMPASS



A

B

C

D

E

According to the dials, the plane is banked left, flying level, and is headed south. (B) is the correct answer, because at position (B) the plane is banked left, flying level, and is headed south.

In each problem choose the position of the plane that is correct for the dial readings; then blacken the space on the answer sheet which corresponds to the answer you select. If you are not sure which is the correct answer, make the best guess you can. Work rapidly and carefully until you are told to stop. When you finish one page, go on to the next.

You will have 5 minutes to complete the 20 items. If you finish before time is called, you may go back over your work.

DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO.

APPENDIX C

NAME _____ CLASS NO. _____ DATE _____
 LAST FIRST MIDDLE

AOC _____ N/C _____ M/C _____ AI _____ NAO _____ OI _____

The occupations below were ranked by 350 naval aviation trainees. Note that the left-hand list is ranked from top to bottom according to "PRESTIGE," while the right-hand list is ranked in terms of "CAREER SECURITY." Compare the prestige of the Naval or Marine Aviator with that of the occupations in the left-hand list and write in the letters NA at that point in the list where you feel the Naval or Marine Aviator fits. Do the same for the Naval Aviation Officer (non-pilot)-NAO. Then, in the right-hand list compare the NA and NAO career security with that of the occupations listed and write each into the appropriate space.

PRESTIGE

CAREER SECURITY

Physician	17	Physician
Scientist	16	Engineer
Minister	15	Scientist
Lawyer	14	Minister
Engineer	13	Banker
College Professor	12	College Professor
Banker	11	Lawyer
Architect	10	Architect
Politician	9	News Columnist
Businessman	8	Accountant
News Columnist	7	Businessman
Radio - TV Announcer	6	Personnel Director
Personnel Director	5	Farmer
Sales Promotion	4	High School Coach
High School Coach	3	Radio - TV Announcer
Accountant	2	Sales Promotion
Farmer	1	Politician

BOTTOM

BOTTOM

APPENDIX D

Intercorrelation Matrix -- AOC's* During Pre-Flight Training

	001	002	003	004	005	006	007	008	009	010	011	012	013	014	015
Age	01	251	-043	086	-027	100	-037	-010	087	075	031	-083	045	040	-002
Education	02		019	028	-060	-063	075	019	090	046	-116	-095	022	003	-054
AQT	03			403	170	010	541	055	202	276	-105	-084	-053	-138	081
MCT	04				054	073	360	065	286	283	-059	-102	010	-090	244
SAT	05					-096	080	-045	179	331	-044	-024	-112	-037	-000
BI	06						-033	109	035	143	159	071	018	054	103
Mathematics	07							-058	085	209	-005	033	008	-032	124
Background	08								090	049	-020	-020	-093	-037	-025
Altitude Judgment	09									296	-025	-054	-026	043	083
Instrument Comprehension	10										057	058	020	056	159
Prestige Score	11										341	322	108	038	
Prestige Difference	12											076	330	137	
Security Score	13												355	038	
Security Difference	14													008	
Complete/Attribute	15														

*N = 407. A coefficient of .115 is significant at the .01 level.

APPENDIX D

Intercorrelation Matrix -- Cadets* During Pre-Flight Training

	001	002	003	004	005	006	007	008	009	010	011	012	013	014	015
Age	01	286	-058	019	051	059	-103	-015	090	098	-031	-059	055	020	-080
Education	02	124	-005	046	-022	085	027	021	058	-008	-030	-011	-005	-092	
AQT	03	371	225	-099	480	048	161	164	-042	004	009	-018	-017		
MCT	04	180	134	292	-063	244	242	-070	-016	006	024	024	187		
SAT	05	000	083	020	230	266	025	063	017	-015	089				
BI	06	-109	184	-032	208	041	-011	-001	044	179					
Mathematics	07	-098	090	063	003	045	-006	-032	057						
Background	08														
Altitude Judgment	09														
Instrument Comprehension	10														
Prestige Score	11														
Prestige Difference	12														
Security Score	13														
Security Difference	14														
Complete/Attrite	15														

*N = 379. A coefficient of .120 is significant at the .01 level.

APPENDIX D

Intercorrelation Matrix -- AOC's* After Pre-Flight Training

	001	002	003	004	005	006	007	008	009	010	011	012	013	014	015	016	017	018	019	020	021	022	023	
Age	01	250	-048	033	-026	099	-121	-010	-000	-096	012	-054	-010	036	-037	-008	087	072	024	-086	040	040	-006	
Education	02	018	027	-060	-063	-106	034	003	-145	-013	-019	-099	007	075	020	090	046	-119	-096	021	003	-056		
AQT	03	,00	172	069	297	182	418	260	350	430	419	348	544	059	199	274	-115	-089	-061	-139	074			
MCT	04	055	071	146	115	354	405	157	313	402	045	355	071	278	282	-063	-018	001	-092	237				
SAT	05	-096	093	076	134	033	057	196	099	090	081	-045	181	332	-043	-024	-112	-037	000					
Bl	06	-030	042	062	078	-071	-015	110	024	-034	110	033	142	159	070	016	053	101						
Leadership	07	100	340	267	410	270	355	248	114	030	061	113	-095	-049	-040	-078	061							
Peer Rating	08	194	225	205	313	253	152	212	017	060	163	-050	-088	-062	004	216								
Physiology	09	409	395	398	496	202	287	-001	094	222	-036	-004	035	-097	168									
Power Plants	10	253	416	604	044	280	-076	060	158	-027	035	038	-074	240										
Naval Orientation	11	279	337	289	105	055	124	117	-124	-058	-078	-112	052											
Navigation	12	539	178	462	-036	120	285	-090	068	-030	061	172												
Principles of Flight	13	124	380	-064	098	175	-102	-047	-041	-133	193													
Study Skills	14	168	078	022	100	-067	-006	-077	-032	052														
Mathematics	15	-054	072	213	004	030	006	-035	120															
Background	16	096	050	-018	-018	-089	-037	-021																
Altitude Judgment	17	299	-021	-059	-031	041	076																	
Instrument Comprehension	18	049	056	014	056	156																		
Prestige Score	19	341	315	111	030																			
Prestige Difference	20	071	330	133																				
Security Score	21	357	029																					
Security Difference	22																							
Complete/Attire	23																							

*N = 405. A coefficient of .116 is significant at the .01 level.

APPENDIX D

Intercorrelation Matrix -- Coders* After Pre-Flight Training

	001	002	003	004	005	006	007	008	009	C10	011	012	013	014	015	016	017	018	019	020	021	022	023		
Age	01	287	-057	020	058	060	037	159	-083	-016	016	-028	-026	019	-104	-013	093	103	-035	-061	060	023	-076		
Education	02	123	-005	042	-022	179	086	033	-029	131	062	048	141	086	026	020	055	-005	-029	-014	-007	-097			
AQT	03	373	223	-097	343	122	308	159	349	326	328	377	480	050	161	165	-040	006	008	-020	-022				
MCT	04	179	133	-75	126	295	460	116	217	441	119	293	-065	242	240	-068	-016	003	022	186					
SAT	05	-001	058	141	165	013	022	145	087	052	086	015	226	258	038	069	003	-026	072						
BI	06	-003	-029	-024	225	-017	048	175	001	-108	183	-034	206	042	-011	-004	043	180							
Leadership	07	137	268	229	429	193	333	318	185	020	079	072	-068	-006	028	-047	003								
Peer Rating	08	045	120	105	226	167	101	165	040	033	133	-075	-031	070	042	168									
Physiology	09	345	329	253	379	192	222	-059	170	166	-018	066	006	-026	138										
Power Plants	10	202	356	605	145	283	-049	026	055	-013	049	-007	-005	260											
Navy Orientation	11	194	376	399	191	015	013	011	033	102	107	-046	086												
Navigation	12	439	091	420	-001	172	196	-009	-044	056	040	224													
Principles of Flight	13	200	384	-076	086	113	-036	-035	005	-064	199														
Study Skills	14	086	120	034	100	027	006	019	-075	005															
Mathematics	15	-097	091	065	001	044	-003	-030	060																
Background	16	018	050	-007	115	001	062	-073																	
Altitude Judgment	17	160	-064	-J10	017	000	001																		
Instrument Comprehension	18	-005	149	011	090	083																			
Prestige Score	19	353	202	104	003																				
Prestige Difference	20	020																							
Security Score	21	448	110																						
Security Difference	22	054																							
Complete/Attribute	23																								

*N = 377. A coefficient of .120 is significant at the .01 level.

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